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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001026

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SA/FO (AMB MQUINN), SA/A, S/CR, SA/PAB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM, INL
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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REL NATO/ISAF/AS/NZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2026

TAGS: SNAR PREL PTER ASEC AF

SUBJECT: PRT/LASHKAR GAH - POPPY ERADICATION MOVING
FORWARD; ATTACKS EXPECTED

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Classified By: POL COUNSELOR ANGUS SIMMONS FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Helmand Governor Daud told PRToffs on March 6 that Taliban forces are moving into Helmand and are likely to attack the Afghan Eradication Force (AEF). The governor is also concerned that there may be attacks in other districts due to the large security commitment to the eradication campaign. A governor-supported eradication force, led by the deputy governor and police chief departed for the remote southern district of Dishu on March 6th. Afghan National Army (ANA) troops are also part of this mission. The AEF is expected to depart Lashkar Gah on March 7 for southern Garmseer district. The governor apparently expects that some cash for work (CFW) assistance will be sequenced with poppy eradication. The governor has made some changes in district governments to mitigate corruption during the eradication campaign. END SUMMARY.

SECURITY CONCERNs

12. (SBU) Governor Daud told us that Helmand is facing two intertwined threats. One is the ongoing insurrection, currently focused on the Sangin area, where Taliban elements are regularly engaging the Afghan National Army (ANA). The governor also noted that, in addition to Sangin, "we are losing secure areas in Gereshk day by day." (Note: Gereshk is Helmand's second largest city. End Note).

13. (SBU) In addition to the insurrection problem, the governor said that he is concerned about the possibility of Taliban attacks on eradication forces. The National Directorate of Security (NDS) has information that a significant number of Taliban have moved into Helmand from various points along the Pakistan border. NDS Chief Colonel Ali said that it is likely that there will be roadside bombs and/or night attacks. Colonel Ali said that, with many security forces tied down with the eradication campaign, attacks are likely in other districts and Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital. The governor said that he is concerned over the lack of ammunition for his auxiliary police. (Note: A visiting U.S. expert said that there is sufficient ammunition; the problem is the Ministry of Interior's distribution. End Note).

HEADING TO DISHU AND KHANOSHIN

14. (SBU) A governor-supported (through funds made available from the Ministry of Interior) force along with some ANA elements departed Lashkar Gah on March 6 for Dishu. According to the governor, they also have 40 tractors. The deputy governor and police chief are leading the governor's forces. (Note: Both the deputy governor and the police chief are suspected of being corrupt and involved in drug smuggling. End Note.) Dishu is a lightly populated district (estimated population of 28,000) with no district government and only a few villages. Much of the population is nomadic. Embassy Comment: This group began eradicating in Dishu March 7 at noon. End Comment.

15. (SBU) The Governor said that for parity reasons he decided to start in this area, despite knowing that there is

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not much poppy cultivated in Dishu. Also, since much of the poppy-cultivated land is owned by big growers who reside elsewhere, it is important to show them that the government can reach to this area. Embassy Comment: Another reason the GOA wanted to begin eradication in Dishu is that the GOA believes that the Taliban is supporting poppy cultivation in this area. End Comment. The goal is to avoid criticism that the eradication campaign will favor one district and/or tribe over another. The governor said that the MoI force will rendezvous with the AEF in the southern Garmseer area within 72 hours, including eradication in Khanoshin, the next district north of Dishu. The governor said that 40 tractors are available for this phase.

16. (SBU) A visiting U.S. expert expressed concern that this time frame is unrealistic. There is also concern that the logistics train is not fully developed in terms of provisions and maintenance capability in this remote and rough area.

17. (SBU) Concerning evaluation and monitoring, the governor said that representatives from the AEF will accompany his force and provide monitoring and evaluation of how much has been eradicated. They will send daily reports back to the Joint Communications Center.

EXPLANATIONS/ASSISTANCE

18. (SBU) As part of the campaign, the deputy governor and police chief will discuss eradication with Dishu elders and farmers. They will explain the need to enforce the national laws. The governor also will speak on Lashkar Gah television and radio to explain the eradication campaign. (Note: Local TV and radio do not reach Dishu and Khanoshin. End Note.) The governor noted that the deputy governor and police chief will discuss immediate needs with district elders. The governor added that he expected there will be some type of follow on cash for work (CFW) assistance available for mostly tenant farmers. (Note: Per earlier agreements, USAID's CFW

is focused on the northern districts - there are presently no plans for CFW in Dishu or Khanoshin.)

THE HELMAND SHUFFLE

¶9. (C) The governor mentioned several changes in district leadership. The main reason for these changes, he noted, is to mitigate corruption during the eradication campaign. About March 4, the governor sacked the Gereshk district chief and police chief. The new district chief, Nabi Khan, was the former district chief in Garmseer and Nawa districts; he is moderately corrupt by Helmand standards. On the plus side, the new police chief, Mohammed Rafih Sharif is a professional police officer and considered a good administrator. He is the former deputy chief in Cartelegan (near Lashkar Gah). The former Gereshk chief of police, Khan Mohammed, is moving to Lashkar Gah to an assignment not yet determined.

¶10. (C) In Naw Zad, another troubled district, Sarwan Jan, the former police chief of Washir was re-appointed as the Naw Zad police chief. Prior to the job in Washir, he was the police chief of Naw Zad. He is reportedly quite corrupt. Sangin's police chief, Haji Diljon, also viewed as corrupt,

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is moving to Cartelegan. Nomadullah, former chief of Cartelegan, is now the police chief of Washir. He is considered moderately corrupt. Arguably the least appealing new appointment is Haji Mohammed Wali as the new district chief of Mousa Qala (the former district chief was killed by a rocket on February 3). He is reportedly a significant drug smuggler with ties to Ramatullah, one of the former governor's smugglers. He also has a brother currently being held in Guantanamo.

COMMENT

¶11. (SBU) The good news is that the eradication campaign is getting off the ground. Starting the campaign in Dishu and Khanoshin allows the governor to extend the reach of the provincial government to remote areas. If the governor can provide some assistance to the impoverished farmers in these two districts, this will likely increase his standing. However, the logistics challenges and potential resistance (from the Taliban and/or farmers) could undermine the eradication campaign. In addition, an effort led by the deputy governor and the police chief should be viewed in the context of their suspected drug smuggling activities. Similarly, the governor's recent shuffling of officials may have a positive short term on the eradication campaign. However, they are unlikely to make a substantive difference in governance.

¶12. (U) Dushanbe minimize considered.

NEUMANN